

of living organisms per square meter surpasses even the famous Amazon rainforest. Science has determined that rainforests are extremely important to the life cycles and functions of this planet. Trees filter air by taking carbon, nitrogen, phosphates, and other airborne chemicals in the atmosphere and fix them into the soil where they provide nutrients, in turn producing vast amounts of oxygen. Forests are the lungs of our planet. Trees redistribute water, functioning as huge sponges to retain water and pumping vast quantities of water back into the atmosphere. Rainforests greatly affect weather patterns.

The remote and rugged location of this virgin pristine wilderness has protected it from one hundred and fifty years of industrial logging until today! Less than 9% of the original old growth forest remains in low valley bottoms on Vancouver Island. 85 of the original 91 watersheds have been completely devastated by logging to date. Old growth temperate rainforests are on the verge of extinction.

After passing over the last mountain ridge, through a tunnel plowed through 10 feet of snow at the peak, we descended into the East Creek valley where we came upon many clear-cuts devoid of life. Roads blasted through the mountainsides linked large areas of stumps along the natural watershed of East Creek.

In the past few years LeMare Logging, operating out of Port McNeill, has felled most of the old growth forest in the upper watershed of East Creek. Each of the clear-cuts is focused around a creek or tributary where the largest trees once grew. Massive stumps from ancient Yellow Cedar, Mountain Hemlock, Pacific Red Cedar, and Balsam Fir trees and line the banks of these waterways.

We watched as more trees were being felled; lots of mess, and a deadly silence after the crew trucks had left the valley. Hundreds of truckloads of logs are lying on the sides of the roads, waiting for the snow to melt so they can be hauled to the boom yards for shipping. This will happen in the next few weeks.